

DELLACRA MAKES

TELLAGRA MAKES RAPID HEADWAY IN THE SOUTH

and disorganized fight by the medical fraternity and the public health service.

100 per cent. There are more than 10,000 cases in the eleven Southern States alone this summer, as opposed to about 1,000 in thirteen States two years ago.

Believing that the disease with its rapid spread has long since passed the point where it became a serious menace

to the public health, the Public Health and Marine Hospital Service has been offering the only concerted study of and fight against the disease, and will ask an appropriation of \$24,000 from the next Congress to be used in fighting the malady.

The annual report of Surg. Gen. Wyman, of the Public Health and

The hands of the service, therefore, are practically tied, and the medical literature of the country contains practically nothing about pellagra, which was discovered in this country only as far back as 1906. The country is left practically helpless by the helplessness of the service. The service ready has given over one hospital and the services of two officials entirely to the observation and care of pellagra cases. The country is left with no resources entirely to the care of pellagra patients.

in charge of Dr. C. H. Lavinder, while Dr. R. H. Grim spends all his time in the field investigating and passing upon applications for admission to the hospital. In addition, the service has sent out from time to time such literature as it has been able to collect, the data for and prepare. These few bulletins of the service are practically all the medical profession in this country have to

About 10,000 New Cases.
The eleven Southern States where the ravages of the disease are fiercest, and where there are approximately 10,000 new cases this year, are Virginia, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Louisiana, Texas, and Kentucky. It is

reported that in one North Carolina village, where there are less than 3,000 inhabitants, 20 cases of pellagra have sprung up this summer, and one North Carolina physician has estimated for the public health service that there have been 50,000 pellagra cases in his State alone since the disease was discovered there six years ago.

ered with any prevalence of the disease, though Illinois has furnished several of the most interesting subjects of study and has a greater number of cases than any other Northern State. New York has had a few cases and the District of Columbia has had several, though most of those discovered in the District could be traced directly to some point farther south. In all, the disease has been re-

Found in California.

A number of State authorities have taken the matter up and instituted campaigns to reduce the danger of the spread of the disease. California, although the

there, has gone so far as to make it a quarantinable disease, requiring reports to municipal health officers of every case noted or treated.

The malady is not believed, however, to be either contagious or infectious, and for that reason it is probably harder to make headway than if the infected district could be cut off, and the spread

As a matter of fact, little progress has been made by the medical profession in determining upon the cause of the disease or in perfecting a cure for it. Do what they may, doctors are unable to prevent the high rate of mortality in the sections where the disease is prevalent. This mortality is estimated at between 50 and 75 per cent of the total number of cases—a much higher rate

than in Italy, where pellagra is supposed to have originated. About 20 per cent of the cases reach the insanitary stage, filling the hospitals and asylums of the South with a loathsome form of mental disorder. Dr. Lavinder, now in charge of the Savannah hospital, was sent to Italy last year by the service to study the disease there. He met investigators there from England, for the

In Italy a national law for the cure and prevention of pellagra is enforced. This law is based entirely upon the theory that the disease is caused by eating spoiled corn, a theory which has been generally accepted in this country. However, two or more hypotheses have recently gained some credence, and, if finally adopted, will prevent the case in

One of the new theories goes on the assumption that the disease is brought by the sting of the sand fly. The other assumes the malady to be brought into the human system by water-borne trematodes, an Italian blood-infecting insect.

tention in Italy and are now being carefully investigated. In this country the fight is still being made on the assumption that 'spoiled' corn is the principle agent in the spread of the disease. The corn theory puts a more serious face on the problem when it is explained that by corn is meant chiefly the various products, such as hominy and meal, a

form of which can be disguised by unscrupulous millers and manufacturers. As these foods form the principal subsistence for thousands throughout the South, the result is obvious.

Like cholera, pellagra is stopped by cold weather. Frost, followed by warm weather, has no appreciable effect, a permanent drop in the temperature being necessary. Those cases which are

contracted late and apparently cured by cold weather are often only hibernated, to return again the following spring. In some cases the recurrence continues for years, ultimately ending in insanity. In other cases not more than two weeks may elapse between the first symptoms and death.

The malady is now being treated as a nervous affliction with skin manifesta-

necessary study and investigation may change this diagnosis altogether.